AAAS
ADVANCING SCIENCE, SERVING SOCIETY

March 14, 2013

Alan I. Leshner
Chief Executive Officer and
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The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
Chairwoman, Senate Appropriations Committee
S-122, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski:

On behalf of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the world's largest general scientific organization, I write to you in strong support of the federal research and development budget of the National Science Foundation (NSF). NSF is unique among federal agencies in that it supports all disciplines in a balanced portfolio that uses the scientific peer review system as the foundation for awarding research grants based on merit.

While we generally support efforts to boost National Institutes of Health (NIH) research, I write in opposition to the proposed Coburn-McCain amendment (SA 65) that would seek to eliminate NSF spending on political science and transfer the funds to the NIH National Cancer Institute. We would like to draw your attention to a letter signed in 2011 by 149 scientific societies that strongly oppose attempts to eliminate or substantially reduce funding for specific areas of science, such as social, behavioral, and economic sciences. You can read the letter in its entirety here: http://www.aaas.org/gr/docs/11-07-11nsf_letter.pdf.

NSF political science research grants have contributed to important research on democratization, radicalization, terrorism, and disaster response. These issues are critically important. In fact, every major issue affecting modern society and every major issue affecting our economic competitiveness will ultimately be multidisciplinary in nature, requiring the integration of the physical sciences and biological sciences with the social and behavioral sciences, including political science.

I urge you to protect the integrity of the scientific enterprise by ensuring that NSF and its independent scientific panels determine where the best scientific opportunities are, including in the social, behavioral, and economic sciences. We at AAAS stand ready to work with you.

Sincerely,

Alan I. Leshner

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